

SATURDAY, APRIL 24, 1869.

Subject: Counting the Cost.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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—
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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT.

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COUNTING THE COST.

SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 11, 1869.

“FOR which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?”—LUKE xiv. 28.

FROM the context, lightly considered, the argument would seem to be against haste in becoming religious; but it is not. It is against superficial and shallow religion—not against immediateness. It is an argument for earnestness in religion, rather than for delay and caution. For the crowd, caught by their imagination and their fancy, were thronging to Christ with altogether an insufficient conception of what his preaching meant, and of what discipleship implied. It was to deepen the conception of religion that he used these figures and parables. “Counting the cost”—that is a calculation of value, of course. A man may calculate whether to build little or much; whether to build expensively or cheaply; whether to decorate profusely, or line down the expense to a minimum. But there is a calculation which lies back of all this, and is of even more importance than this. It is, whether one shall go without a dwelling, or shall have one; whether one can, beginning to build, bear the expense. The expense depends largely upon how sumptuously he builds, as well as who builds for him.

But there is another question. Can a man go without building? That is to be counted just as much as the other. It is twofold. When you count the cost, you must say, “Can I afford to build?” And then you must say, “Can I afford to go without a shelter and a home?” And this second question is as really involved in counting the cost as the former; and it is sometimes by far the more important consideration.

There are thousands of persons who, without formally executing a calculation, have virtually decided that they can not afford to enter upon a religious life. They respect religion. They wish that they

had religion. They would be glad if, in some way or other, it was wrought upon them or within them. Yet, on the whole, upon counting the cost, they determine that they can not be religious. Sometimes they even say it. Sometimes they say it, qualified by the article of time. They can not be religious *now*.

But far oftener this is the latent determination rather than the avowed and expressed condition of men. Men look upon a deliberate Christian course, founded upon definite beliefs, progressing through various stages, fed by generic volitions, as a thing so large, so difficult, and even so painful and gloomy, that they shrink from undertaking it, and either put it by—which is only a masked way of refusing it—or else positively decline it. At one time and another, I suppose all the following reasons against undertaking a religious life pass through the minds of men who are moderately thoughtful in respect to moral subjects.

First. That religion is a mystic thing, intangible, indefinite, and, being a matter of inspiration, is scarcely to be sought by the unaided reason of man. If given with irresistible impulse, well; but it is too subtle, too vague, and too remote, to be sought. "Men," say they, "should be practical. We will do our duty as far as it appears from day to day; and if there is any thing else besides that, why, we must wait until it is revealed to us." And so men, under this plausible form of selfishness, under this deceiving term *practical*, substantially avow this: Having two natures—a physical nature and a spiritual one—we will do whatever our physical nature seems to require of us; and the spiritual one, being a little more difficult to train and to educate, we will let God take care of that. We will do nothing—for this is what it really amounts to. When men say, "I will perform my practical duties every day, and then, as to any thing else, I must depend on God's grace," what they mean by "practical duties," is, sensuous duties. But the duty of thought, and the duty of sentiment, and the duty of aspiration, and the duty of love—these are as practical as is the duty of common morality. The provision of raiment and food for the household is not one whit more practical than is devotion, than is faith, than is hope.

What men, then, really mean is this: It is easier to live a sensuous life, and to live a moderately correct sensuous life, and let the spiritual life go. Stripped of all disguises, that is the sum of all this reasoning.

Then, again, men urge that the inherent difficulty of holding the soul in control, and of training the inward disposition is almost insuperable, and that unless power is given by the Holy Spirit, men must wait. And so there are many that do wait, not only through the winter, but just as much through the summer. And they are like

men that are husbandmen, who say, "Such is the vastness of nature, so subtle are natural laws and processes, and so impossible is it that a man should rear harvests unless the light that is in the sun is exerted in his behalf, that all that we can do is to wait for the seasons." That is a good reason for waiting, in January; but is it a good reason for waiting in June? There is truth in this, that no husbandry can take place without the coöperation of great natural laws; but does any man feel that on that account he is justified in folding his hands and doing nothing? And yet, a man's dependence is in no respect more upon God for the influence of the Divine Spirit, by which we cultivate spiritual graces, than is the husbandman's upon the natural sun and the seasons.

It is said, again, that the difficulty of overcoming evil habits is so great, that the difficulty of correcting evil dispositions has been proved by ten thousand instances to be so trying, that a man may well doubt of success; and there be many that, therefore, look upon themselves, almost as sick people sometimes do, who having tried all nostrums, as well as all medicines, all quacks as well as all physicians, and having themselves tried what their own limited experience could dictate, sit down in discouragement to die. There be many that speak of their souls as such persons do of their bodies, saying, "My constitution is broken up. I can not hold out much longer. There is little use in my attempting to do any thing. I must simply smooth my way the few remaining days, and then die." But are men prepared to say this in respect to their souls? And yet, it amounts to this.

The difficulty of breaking off evil habits is great; but if they are not overcome, what then? The difficulty of correcting evil dispositions is great. No man has over-estimated it. What then? Do you mean to say this deliberately, "I give myself over evermore to evil habits; and since it is very hard to correct dispositions, I yield to them. Proud am I, and pride is hard to restrain: it shall not be restrained. I will not try. Gross and sensuous am I, and my experience has taught me that it requires an amount of watching and fervor of purpose, and a determination of will, such that I despair"? What then? Do you surrender? You say, "The difficulty is so great that, when I come to count the cost, I do not dare to venture." Why not say it in plain English? "I give up the whole question of my soul's salvation forever and forever. Let it go; let it go. Eat, now, drink, and be merry: to-morrow I shall die." Why not put it in plain English? For that is what the reasoning comes to.

There are those who say, or think, in addition to these things, "Religion is not so much the result of personal volition, perhaps, after all, as the resultant of all the forces acting upon a man through his whole life; and therefore it is not worth while to strive after the

impracticable. It is not worth a man's while to fret himself with special endeavors. God has so organized human society that it is a vast training instrument, and men are trained by laws, and are trained by their business, and are trained by their associates, and are trained in the household. A man is pretty much what all these fortunate or unfortunate influences tend to make him. And it is scarcely worth while for a man to do much." This is the thought of not a few. It is simply fatalism. It is the surrendering of man's manhood. It is the declaration of a man that he has no more power over his circumstances than the leaf has over its. It is the uncrowning of himself. Beginning with the lower creation, this plea is true. The summer fruit is the resultant of the action of physical causes. As you come into the animal kingdom, if there be any such thing as rising and development in progress, it is true that in the animal kingdom, step by step, the liberty and power of the creature over his circumstances augment. A man is distinguished from the animal creation among other things by this preëminently—that while he, too, is as to his body subject to great natural laws, and while his liberty is bounded by a definite circle, yet within that circle, with a larger force than any other created thing, he is the master of his circumstances and of himself.

If a man says, "I am what the mountains make me, or the plain; I am what the zones make me; if I live in the torrid zone, I am one thing, and if in the temperate, another; I am the creature of long winters and short summers, or of long summers and short winters; I am better or worse according to the nation in which I was born," all these things have an influence. But if a man says he is the mere effect of these great laws, he takes the crown off from his head, and ranks himself, I will not say below manhood, but below beasthood. He comes back to inorganic creation; and all that has been gained in the evolution of creation, by which mere matter, organized, has risen up to intelligence, and from intelligence to liberty, and from liberty, through culture and spirituality, to a boundless liberty—all this he throws away, and says, "I am a creature of circumstances—not a creature of my own self-control."

Men look, again, upon the situation in which they find themselves; they perceive and estimate the power of sympathy in them with the world around them; and they form the estimate; and they say, "Is it probable that one situated as I am, so easily moved, drawn by the company that I am in, laughing with the gay and weeping with the sad, rising in my pulse and my emotion, (for as the thermometer rises with the thermic conditions, so I come up, or I go down,) and being, as experience has shown me that I am, in sympathy with pretty much all the things that are round about me—is it probable that I can

break up the strong bias, and come out from such sympathies as these, and become a Christian?" Men often, on counting the cost, say, "I know I can not. What is the use of my trying? I am sure I can not do it."

"And why should I repeat," say some, "the experiment of years? I have run in toward religion as often almost as the tides have run toward the shore; I have been refluxed as the tides, and gone back again to the sea, from whence I came. Why should I?" Counting the cost, men say, "My sympathetic nature is such that it is quite hopeless for me to attempt to become a Christian. I must be made one by something stronger than I am, or I never shall be one."

To reinforce such reasoning, men consider and estimate, likewise, the retentive power of organized business, which absorbs their time and strength, and which a man can not any more get out of at his will than a passenger on an ocean voyage can, at his mere will, get out of the ship in which he is sailing. Men's business is not a thing which they can easily let go or take up as they please. As it were, it is a vast machine. They are as a wheel in it. And in the revolution of affairs they must keep step. And men say, "If there were no other reasons, this would make it hopeless for me to attempt to become a Christian. I can not lay aside my business. It will not let go of me." Just as if a Christian man was not bound to conduct every lawful business just as much as if he was not a Christian! As if it would take a man any longer to conduct business on right principles than it does on wrong! As if it took any more time for a man to be benevolent than it does to be selfish! As if it took any more time for a man to negotiate honestly than it does craftily! I say it takes more time for a man to conduct business wickedly than it does to conduct it virtuously.

Men say, "I can not stop my business to be a Christian." Do not stop it. Let it go on. You go on with it; but go on with it as a Christian man should. "I have not time." Have not time! All that I ask is, that, as the moments pulsate, you shall throw into them the life of a true Christian manhood, instead of the selfish life of the animal, or the half-civilized animal.

This whole plea that a man must dismount in order to become a Christian, that he has got to turn back from active business into some cave, and, monk-like, go through a certain amount of experience, where, being purged, and scoured, and cleaned, he then can be turned out again, and take hold of his business afresh—it is all a delusion. If a man is a merchant, be a merchant; but be a *Christian* merchant. If a man is a mechanic, continue a mechanic; but be a *Christian* mechanic. If a man be a public servant, be a statesman; but be a *Christian* statesman. When, therefore, men counting the

cost, ponder and say, "My business is so extended, or so ensnaring that it will not let me go," I say, You do not need to be let go. To be a Christian does not require it.

Again, the feeble virtues that men have at various times essayed, have revealed to them the real power in them of certain passions, of certain inbred dispositions, and of certain sins. There are men that know, or that think they know, that they shall fall. "If I am brought," say some, "under such circumstances, I know perfectly well that all the profession of religion in the world would not make any difference with me. I should break out and fire with anger; and can I deliberately profess to be a Christian when I know that I can not control that passion?"

Another man says, "I know perfectly well that I have a selfish pride, an intensity of self-consideration; and it would be the uttermost folly in me to come before a congregation and profess that I had accepted benevolence as a law of my life. I know that inbred disposition is in me; and that I must carry it in me as long as I live."

Other men say, "Do not I know those sins of passion, those secret sins of lust? I know perfectly well how they have controlled, and how they will control." Sometimes men are almost afraid to touch them or talk about them, for fear that they shall spring back upon them. But what should we think of men that were suffering from neuralgia, who, if their friends should gather together and say to them, "A physician has been found who professes to cure, and who has had great success in curing this disease," should say to them, "For heaven's sake, do not say a word to me about that. I have just this moment got relieved from an awful fiery paroxysm; and if I should have a doctor, I should in all probability, right before his face, fall into one of these horrible states. I can not profess to be a convalescent under any doctor. I know that neuralgia will come back on me." As if you had had an invitation to make believe that you are a well man! It was not that at all. It was that you should put yourself under the care of a physician, that you might take some steps toward convalescence; that you might employ both the remedy and the regimen by which you would grow more and more toward health. No man supposes that he overcomes, by the grace of God, at one blow, all the wickedness that there is in him. A man that becomes a Christian, being proud, must go through a process by which that pride shall learn how to clothe itself with Christian dispositions. A man that is very selfish, becoming a Christian, has a battle yet to fight with that selfishness; because conversion does not take it away from him. Conversion merely puts him to school, that it may teach him to train it aright. A man excessively addicted to the world is not going out to be lifted above the world wholly to

be seen of men. If a man is going to be a good and devout Christian, he has a work to do. The overture of the Gospel is not that you should take it as work completed, but as little children in the kingdom of God—in the school of Christ—and begin to study. In your ignorance enter the church, or rather enter a Christian life by the help of the church, for the sake of convalescence. *Begin* cure.

If, therefore, a man says, "I have certain passions and inbred sins and dispositions that I know I can not overcome," I know you can not overcome them as long as you pamper them. I know you can not as long as you excuse them. I know that, just as long as you hide behind them, and shelter yourself from those vivific influences by which alone the soul can rise to its higher life and to its supernal nature, you can not do these things. I know that you can not do them so long as you hold yourself aloof. No man overcomes difficulties by cowardice.

But there is no passion, and there are no lusts, and there is no stature of pride, and there is no frivolity of vanity, and there is no wide, diffusive selfishness, which can not be overcome by the grace of God, if once a man will enter the warfare; but it is to be a warfare, and it is to be begun. It will never come to a man as a completed victory; but it will come to him, if he be victor at all, when he has earned it at the point of his spear, and by the edge of his sword.

But there are many who reason in themselves that it is useless for them to think of attempting a religious life, because they have really no moral feeling, and very little interest in religion. Moral *vis inertiae* is the plea, and they are indifferent to the subject. "Is it probable," they say, "that a man will ever be less indifferent? If a man, already under all the influences which are brought to bear, in a Christian community, on the conscience and the understanding, has very little moral feeling, is it likely that, as he grows older, and his feelings grow naturally less and less resilient, he will increase in feeling? On this very subject," men say, "I have counted the cost. I do not think it is likely. As for me, I do not feel; and until I do feel, how shall I act?"

It is at this point, too, that all the uncertainties arise, and men say within themselves—men that are given to thinking—"Am I not as good as a great many men that are Christians, or that call themselves so?" There is many a man that is better in one sense, but that is a great deal worse in another. There are many men who are born with every single point of disposition in their favor. They do not get angry. Why? Because their original organization is so balanced that there is no clash or collision in themselves. They have a harmonious adjustment of their faculties, and every thing moves on quietly, and they say, "I am better than that man who is already in

the church. I am ashamed when I see him—to see a man that professes religion, and that yet explodes and blazes as he does, with untempered and uncontrolled feeling. I should be ashamed to get angry as that man does.” Why, you are never tempted that way. You are equable; your pulse does not bound; that man is all fire. You are perfectly tempered and self-possessed. That is your peculiarity. You are no more entitled to credit for that, than you are for being five feet eight in height. That is what God gave you to start with. That man has a fiery temper. He has fought it with tears, with prayers, with watchings; and, though he has not gained such victories as he could have desired, or as his friends desired, God sees that there is many a Waterloo that is fought in the soul of a man without any historian to record it. God sees that there is many and many a man who lays out more strength and real effort to overcome a bad temper, than you, peaceable, placable man, will lay out in the whole of your life. He, in every year, does more real, more heroic work, more self-denying work, than you will do in your whole life. And yet you are a better man than he, in one sense. You do not swear. If he does not, it is not because he does not feel like it. You are never tempted. He has a thousand temptations; and perhaps, the great majority of them he dashes to the ground, and overcomes. Now and then he is overborne, and you stand and point at him.

Here are two men starting upon a journey—one a perfect athlete. For him to walk and to run is no more than for a grayhound. He starts upon his journey. He makes his thirty, or forty, or fifty miles a day, without the least difficulty. The man that starts with him on the same journey was born a cripple, and he suffers excessively. He is club-footed; one of his limbs is shorter than the other; and at every step a pain shoots through his loins. With twisted feet, and feeble, at any rate, he hobbles along. And your nimble man comes past him in the morning, bright and lithe, and laughs, and says, “This is a traveler! We are both travelers! How does he compare with me?” That man makes fifty miles, and this man makes five; but in making five, he has done more than the other man would in making fifty or five hundred. For the first man runs with his nature. He has very little to overcome, very little to excite, very little that requires courage, or heroism, or hardihood, or endurance, or any manly trait. It is queer water that will not run down-hill. It is strange, when a man is so organized that he can be virtuous easier than any thing else, and he runs down-hill in that direction, if he is not good to that extent. But where a man has the torment of a bad endowment, and he has made headway against it, he may be, in one sense, worse than you are. And yet, God says that the publicans and the harlots will

enter the kingdom of God before many of you will. If you could measure the degree of effort that they have put forth, and the light and the opportunities that they have had ; if you could measure the whole problem, and not merely the external surface of it, you would see that those who accomplish the least are sometimes deserving of the most credit.

At this point it is, too, in determining whether they shall come into the church, that they say, "There is no need of it. I am as good already as those who are in the church"—which is very likely true. That is to say, they may be as good externally.

Ah friends ! do you know that when persons wish to compare themselves with professors of religion, in order to excuse themselves, in order to find some justification for their own torpidity and their own indifference, they never pick very wisely ? They do not come into the church and pick out the persons that are really Christians. They always pick out the scapegraces. If there is a man that ought not to be in the church, they know it as quick as a crow knows where carrion is, and they will take that man and hold him up, and say, "That is your Christian, is it ? I do not need to become a Christian. I am as good as that already." You will find that they will select, if not such ones as these, then, men that are in the midst of battle—for I consider a man that is doing business in New-York to be just like a man that is in contest on the battle-field. In the whirl and din of the battle-field, a man does not always step in the best places, nor with the most graceful postures and gestures. It is a strife for life to him, and no matter what he does in the hour of conflict. We do not look for the best aspects of a man in that moment when he is striving for his own life. And so it is when men are beset ; when they are under the most powerful temptations ; when they are being swung and swirled through the whirlpools that are sucking down so many. Here is a man that may be a very good man, but that is cornered by circumstances which are so strong that he is twisted this way and that, until, when he comes out, he is disheveled ; and people stand and look on him, and say, "Do you know that man ? He is a deacon ! —a *deacon* !" They lie in wait. I have known men that watched after professors of religion. I have a cat in the country, that, knowing that there is a rat in the drain, will lie crouched in the grass for six hours together, waiting for that rat to come out. And I know people that watch at doors where Christians are to come out, just as patiently, and with just as much humanity ! They like religion ; but they like to see folks that have got religion, or that make believe that they have got it, show that they have it. And so they watch all around, and spy out the faults of professed Christians, and say, "If those are Christians, I do not need to become a Christian."

Ah! the best Christians, frequently, are those who are fighting the battle of poverty, and whose name nobody hears. Go ask God's angels where they see the most courage. Not at the cannon's mouth; not at the hilted sword. Go see that saintly Christian mother that, for the space of twenty years, has suffered days and nights of pain, in order to give, literally, her life for her children. Left, when her husband died, a widow, in extreme poverty, she determines, by the love she bore him, as well as by the love she bears them, that they shall grow up to intelligence and education; and through toiling pain, as much as martyrs feel at the stake, by day and by night, willingly, in long months—oh! how long the year is to misery!—she has given herself to these children. And now, one by one, as they have come upon the stage, in answer to her heroic efforts, they are prospered. But the sands are running out. She has used herself up. And at that time when woman should become matron, and, after all her suffering and shattering, should begin to be serene and happy, her forces are failing; and in poverty she is dying. She looks back upon her whole life, and there has never been a day that has not been bitter. There has never been a day in which she could have lived if she had not believed in God; and now she is dying. Ask God's angels if there is any hero on the battle-field that is so heroic as this poor, spent Christian, that is dying, and glad to die; that has literally poured her life out like a cup of bitterness and pain for other people.

Now tell me, are you a Christian? You pick out men that are in the hurly-burly of life, and see their imperfections—why do not you go to this saint that is dying in poverty and obscurity? Why do not you see what noble sisters there are? Why do not you seek out the heroic martyrs in the domestic sphere? Here is where you are to find the truest Christians. Here is where heavenly beauty may be found. And you know, and I know, and every man knows, who is acquainted with society, that there is such a thing as a Christian life, and that there are Christians compared with which you are a poor miserable starveling.

Here it is, too, that, in making this count, men are accustomed to plead their doubts. "Who knows," say they, "whether religion is, after all, what it is thought to be? Who knows whether it is any thing but a fantasy?—an amiable fantasy, a poetic fantasy, an exhilaration, very pleasing, very desirable, but having no solid substratum—no basis in fact and truth? Who knows, after all, whether religion so called, is more than a poet's dream? Why should I spend my time seeking after this will-of-the-wisp? How can I be to blame for doubting pretty much every thing, when I find that the churches, one after another, doubt pretty much every thing? Every church thinks *it* is right, and all the rest wrong; each church has its specialty,

and thinks its specialty is right, and that the specialties of all the other churches are wrong. So that if you take the sum of all the disbelievings of churches, you will find that the churches themselves are the fathers of infidelity."

To some extent this may be true; but it is an important distinction to which I call your attention—that with all the sects in Christendom, perhaps, with inconspicuous exceptions, the things to be sought men agree about. They disagree only as to the method of seeking them. All Christians are united in respect to the ends gained. The instruments by which you are to gain these great ends, men quarrel about.

Now, the main and most important thing for every man to consider, is, What are the ends and the aims of life? And if you ask that, there is substantial agreement among all Christians. Men dispute, for instance, as to the attributes of God; but that is a mere question of mental philosophy. Does any one dispute as to whether a man is proud and selfish? Does any man dispute as to whether a man is unintelligent and ignorant? Is there any difference between Protestant and Catholic in the belief that all men are low; that all men need both divine and human illumination? Is there any difference among Protestants? Do not all the sects of Protestants agree that men need to be born again? One will explain what *being born again* is in one way, and another will explain it in another way; but it comes to this, that a man should be lifted up out of self-seeking vulgarity, out of the realm of the appetites and passions; and that he should become a rational creature, a spiritual being, a true and devout worshiper of God. The great end that religion seeks in man—namely, the regeneration and enriching of his spiritual nature—all agree about. There is scarcely any difference in this respect between Unitarian and Orthodox; between Baptists, Methodists, Lutherans, Congregationalists, and Episcopalians, high or low. They are all or them quarreling about how to organize people after they have got them into the Christian church; they will quarrel about clothes, about lappets, and linens, and silks; they will quarrel about robes; they will quarrel about the days which we are to use as instruments of teaching; they will quarrel about churches; they will quarrel about doctrines; about speculative or philosophical forms; but they do not quarrel as to this—that every man needs to have the grace of God in his soul; that every man is bound to love God; that every man is bound to love his fellow-man; and that this spirit ought to be exercised so as to control every one of the vulgar instincts of his nature. All agree in these things, and these are the substantial things.

Why, here are, in a neighborhood, we may say, a score of farmers; and a man goes through that neighborhood and hears them all talk-

ing. He hears them when they get together at the Farmers' Club. And when he goes away, he says, "Well, I have made up my mind that there is no use of being a farmer." "Why?" he is asked. "Oh! husbandry is all a humbug." "How is that?" "Just hear them. How they quarrel and dispute! There are not two farmers in all that neighborhood that agree. I went to hear them talk on grass; then on wheat; then on cotton; then on Indian corn; and there were just as many theories and notions as there were men. I have, therefore, made up my mind that agriculture is a humbug."

But let me ask you, Did not every one of these farmers raise corn? "Yes, I suppose he did." Did he not raise wheat? "Yes." Grass? "Oh! yes." Well, that is the chief end of husbandry, is it not? "Yes; but then, they did not agree as to the means of doing it." It does not make any difference whether they did or did not, if all of them meant wheat, and grass, and grain, and got it. One might do it by spring plowing, and another by fall plowing; one might do it by one of Nourse & Mason's plows, and another might do it by one of Ames's plows; one might do it by scarifying, and another one by rolling; one might claim that clay is to be dealt with so, and another might dispute it, because he has a sand-loam. Every one of them might quarrel about the implements they use, about the time to cultivate, about when to put in the seed, and about how to treat it after it is in. But after all, they believe in the one main thing. They believe in fat oxen; they believe in full granaries; they believe in a farmer's raising enough to clothe and feed himself and his household. That is what they do believe in; and they do it.

Now, God's husbandmen are just like a neighborhood of farmers that are intolerant, and that are forever quarreling with each other. But, after all, men are unanimous in seeking the meat of life, and are alike in all essential particulars; and the variation that there is between them is merely external and incidental in the operative methods, and not in the thing operated upon.

But there are men who say, "My doubt goes deeper than that. I can not say that I believe—on rational grounds I can not say it." Oh! that men were as willing to explore the unknown as Columbus was, who saw nothing, who heard nothing, but, moved with an invincible faith, through the night and through the day, through clouds and baffling winds, and in spite of insurrectionary companions, still pressed forward until the happiest hour of mortal life was his, when dim in the horizon he saw the long-believed land, long sought, and now found. All the reckoning in the world, nothing would have convinced Columbus that land was not there, but sailing toward it. That settled the problem.

Now, we hold out to men, not certain theories, not a certain sche-

dule of beliefs. We hold out to men the idea of a higher manhood than belongs to them by nature. We say that it is possible to force up the faculties. We say that it is possible to inspire your life with disclosures and developments such as you know nothing of in the natural state. And we declare to you, that you never can find out whether it is true or not except by going toward it. Prove it. For it is one of those things which are susceptible of demonstration in no way so much as by actual experiment. Truths of emotion are never known by ratiocination. They are known only by experience. Pre-eminently, religion is a matter of personal experience. And therefore when a man says, "I am rationally skeptical," I say, You are irrationally a skeptic.

In respect to all these theories and reasonings which I have gone over, and of necessity cursorily, I ask you whether, in looking them over, you do not recognize them as representing pretty much the experience of your own mind; whether, in one shape or another, these thoughts and reasonings have not come up in your mind?

I ask you next, when you come to look at them drawn out consecutively, chaptered as it were, do you not, can you not, at any rate, see that this is a view that you have taken, a calculation that you have made, unfairly, unjustly, purely from one side—namely, from the side of your lower natures. You have gone into the calculation of the chances of success; but altogether on the lower side.

I go further than this. I say, if any child of yours should reason about a thing that was worth having as you reason about religion, you might reason with the child, but you would accompany your reasoning, I think, with the cure for folly which Solomon exhorts to! What a pity it is that family discipline has to stop short at the point where it does! Many men would be helped by a good sound physical argument! Rubification would do them good!

If your child says to you, "My father, I have been thinking of this matter of education of which you talked to me, telling me that I must be a philosopher, or an artist, or something of that sort; I have calculated the chances; and I am so surrounded with jolly young fellows, my companions are such witching little devils, I so like to do tricks, it is so pleasant to have my freedom, and I am in so much doubt about this whole matter of an education, that, after looking at my faculties and passions, I am satisfied I never can do any thing; and I rather doubt whether there is any such thing as education, father, anyhow"—if your child should talk in that way, would not you call him a fool, and answer him across your knee? And yet, is he doing any thing but that which you do where you are called to godliness, to virtue, to supereminent truth, to love? If there be a fact in God's created world, this is a fact—that when the proclamation of

the Gospel, which is, "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself," is made in your ears, you turn round and say, "What is love? Is it possible that a man can love, and that his character can be moulded on such a basis as this?" Do not you urge all these vain reasons? Do not you imitate that child? And is it not true that many of the chastisements which you receive at the hand of God, are God's dealings with you as with sons? "For what son is he whom the father chastiseth not?" Ah! because it is so sweet to be proud, you will not be checked; and does not God lay his hand on your pride? Because the remunerations of selfishness are so tempting in the early periods of life, you say you can not become disinterested and truly Christian; and does not God stand in the way to balk your selfishness, and turn your prosperity bottom side up? Because you say, "I love myself, and my present ease," does not God vex your cradle, and your warehouse, and your ship? Does not God stand in the path in which men are walking away from him, with a rod of chastisement, saying, "Hear, O my son, and turn unto me!"

There is no teacher that would permit a pupil to make the same excuse in school. You would call him a dullard, and you would find motives to bring him to study! No parent that loves his child would allow him to reason on the subject of education as you permit yourself to reason in respect to your relations to God.

Count the cost, I say. Remember that sin is the worst investment that any man can make. No man can afford to live and be a proud man. No man can afford to live and be a lustful man. No man can afford to live and be a coarse and sensual man. No man can afford to make an investment of his whole nature in its animal passions or animal inclinations. Neither can you afford to invest all the being that is in you, in your middle range, in your selfish instincts, in your merely worldly and secular faculties. No man can afford to invest his being in any thing lower than faith, hope, love—these three, the greatest of which is *love*. If you invest in every thing else, presently it is bankruptcy, though it may not be in this hour. Woe be to that man who freights his ship, and sends her across the sea to a distant port, to find out that his wares are not marketable; that they lie a dead loss on his hands. Woe be to that man who freights himself, and comes at last into the port above, to find that all that he is, and all that he has, is worthless in that sphere.

Count the cost; count the difficulties; count the expenditure; count the pains and penalties; and then count on the other side, and see whether you can afford to be without God. Can you afford to be without the friendship of the beneficent Christ? Can you afford to live without the consolations and joys of a true Christian faith? Can

you afford to go into bankruptcy, and sickness, and old age, without the staff and without the rod of God by your side? Can you afford to die unsustained by hope? Can you afford to rise in the morning of the resurrection, and put all things at stake on that one glorious, dreadful hour, without any friend in God, and without any hope? Can you afford to live without God and without hope in this world? You can not. No man, no matter how respectable his line of life may be, and no matter how garnished and brilliant his sin may be, can afford to sin against his own soul, as every man does who sins against God.

And now, I exhort you—you that have ciphered on one side—to cipher on the other. You have counted the cost of getting religion: go home and count the cost on the other side. Consider how much it would cost not to have religion. Consider what would be the consequence of being godless, heavenless, homeless. Can you afford, any of you, to rise to shame and everlasting contempt in that hour when the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads?

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

WE rejoice, O Lord! that thou hast broken the bands and the bars of our captivity. We are no longer groveling slaves to the flesh. We are no longer needful servants of this world. Thou hast looked upon us. Thou hast beheld in our souls the germs of life. Thou hast called them forth. We have heard thy voice. We have felt thy power. We have been, by thy great goodness, and by thy great power, already advanced on the way toward thee. We are as little children yet. We do not understand the greatness of thy nature. Nor hast thou made known to us what is the mystery of the way in which thou art working; but thou hast made known to us thy name, which is Love. Thou hast made us feel the drawings of it. Thou hast ordained the household, in which, in purity and in love, our own life unfolded. Thou hast given us to stand, first, in the place of children, looking up; then, of fathers, looking down, governing and governed. We have learned the truths of both relations. And thou hast, against all this blessed experience, unfolded to us the nature of thine own government. Thou art Father; and here is thy power, and this is thine administration. And all the rounds of time, and all realms, shall yet be brought to know and to feel the saving truth of thy love. We rejoice that pride, that selfishness, shall not forever mar, or mist, the truth. We rejoice that the power of the flesh shall not dominate the reason for evermore; that men yet shall rise higher than their animal life, and shall come into sympathy with thee. Thou wilt, by the administration of pain and penalty, as well as by mercy and pleasure, educate thy creatures; and thou wilt still unfold more and more to them thyself as they are unfolded in themselves like unto thee. And so thou art teaching us what is right and true; and in the experience of that which is right and true, we find the evidences and the proofs of thine existence and of thy nature. The pure in heart begin to see God. We rejoice, though our glimpses are but faint, though we are dull, and though we are fragmentary, something we have beheld of thine excellent glory; and we, too, have longed to abide upon the mountain's top. We have longed to leave the strifes and the bewilderments of sin at the foot of the mountain. Yea, selfishly we have been willing to seek our purity, while the great world went groaning on below, possessed of demons. We rejoice that thou hast not permitted us thus to seek self-indulgent piety, but hast sent us back again to our duties; to our life, with its burdens and its cares; to our missions of love, and of mercy, and of instruction.

And now, we desire to wait patiently for the day of thy perfect disclosure. To

see thee as thou art is the beginning of heaven. We do not desire to anticipate; but by faith discerning now, we wait for the more perfect revelation when we shall have been brought home, and all our earthly experience is over.

Vouchsafe that communion of the Holy Spirit, that inspiration of thine own truth. Vouchsafe thy presence both in providence and in grace from day to day, that every one of us may fulfill his duty, bear his appointed burden, bear well the yoke, carry forward the work of God committed to him in the household and in affairs round about him. May we labor in the world, not for sustenance alone. May we labor not for the things which perish. But, in achieving these, may we labor for virtue, and for truth, and for fidelity; for duty, and for service one toward another. So may we live, laboring in our several callings, that every one of them shall be to us an instrument of grace. And we pray that we may not ask to lay down our tasks, or to abbreviate, or find easier ways for them. May we not ask even that the bitter be taken from the medicine, or the point from the thorn. May we rather ask that thy grace may be sufficient for us. May we have that royalty of manhood by which we shall meet undaunted every day the experiences of the day, and go forward willingly, suffering longer or shorter periods as thou, in thine infinite love and wisdom, shalt ordain.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt bring all in thy presence into this fellowship, this knowledge, this submission and obedience unto the Lord their God. Oh! that the time past may be sufficient in which every one has wrought the will of the flesh. May there be a heart given to thy servants to labor and to pray; and by their example, and by their sympathy, and by their inspiration and fidelity, may there be many souls rescued from the infatuation of sin, from its blindings, and from all its dangers. We thank thee that there are so many who are turning their face toward the cross. We thank thee that there are so many on whose countenance rests the light of the coming glory. We beseech of thee that thou wilt multiply their numbers. And grant that all this band who are beginning to walk and sing the songs of Zion may have guardian angels round about them in multitudes; that against them no weapons shall be formed that shall prosper. And we beseech of thee that there may be more and more added to this church of such as shall be saved. Give again to thy servants their children. Given once in birth natural, give them to their parents in spiritual birth. Join together in love those that have loved before, but now in a higher affection and in a nobler trance. Give again friend to friend, but with new compact and higher thought and fidelity. And we beseech of thee that thou wilt quicken the conscience, and clear the understanding and reason of every one, that, with all their heart and soul and mind and strength, they may serve the Lord their God.

Bless not only this church, but all the churches that are this day assembled. Correct any that are in error. Give greater disclosures of truth to those that are but partially true. Grant that thy people may not seek how far they may make the division between one another, but rather may they draw together and unite in the things in which they agree. And so may the garments of Christ again become seamless.

We beseech of thee that thy kingdom may come in all the world, and that everywhere the whole earth may be filled with thy glory.

We ask it for Christ's sake. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

GRANT thy blessing to rest, Our Father, upon the word which we have spoken. Do thou, by the Holy Spirit, send it home upon the heart and upon the conscience. Open the way out from fear and doubt to any that are unwilling captives. Encourage the desponding. Give stability to the wavering. Draw, by thine own blessed power, those that should know thee. Bring back those that have known thee. With repentance and renewed purpose may they begin again to serve the Lord their God. May we all of us live in the communion of the Holy Spirit and in the company and companionship of Jesus Christ, until the heavens shall break and the dawn shall come, and, with the shattering of the body, the soul shall go forth in its immortality.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son, and Spirit. *Amen.*

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Letter from BISHOP SIMPSON.

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Yours truly, M. SIMPSON.

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ISAAC FROTHINGHAM, Treasurer.

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ABSTRACT

OF THE

THIRTY-FIRST SEMI-ANNUAL STATEMENT,

Showing the condition of the Company on the 1st day of Jan., 1869.

ASSETS.

Cash, Balance in Bank,	\$145,795 43
Bonds and Mortgages, being first lien on Real Estate,	1,178,965 00
Loans on Stocks, payable on demand,	409,662 00
United States Stocks, (market value,)	1,404,743 50
State and Municipal Stocks and Bonds, (market value,)	451,305 00
Bank Stocks, (market value,)	128,976 00
Interest due on 1st January, 1869,	38,503 17
Balance in hand of Agents and in course of transmission,	95,619 20
Bills Receivable, (for Premiums on Inland Risks, etc.,)	14,000 94
Other Property, Miscellaneous Items,	56,157 85
Premiums due and uncollected on Policies issued at Office,	6,873 40
Steamer Magnet and Wrecking Apparatus,	35,536 81
Government Stamps on hand,	144 00

Total, **\$3,966,282 30**

LIABILITIES.

Claims for Losses outstanding on 1st January, 1869,	\$104,097 48
Due Stockholders on account of 27th, 28th, 29th Dividends,	2,740 00

\$106,837 48

J. H. WASHBURN, Sec'y.

GEO. M. LYON, Asst. Sec'y.

T. B. GREENE, 2d Asst. Sec'y.

CHAS. J. MARTIN, Prest.

A. F. WILMARTH, Vice-Prest.

D. A. HEALD, 2d Vice-Prest.